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OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

11 October 1957

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DRAFT MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Probable Soviet Action in the Event of Turkish Military Intervention in Syria

1. Since the publication of SNIE 11-9-57 on 24 September, a number of developments have taken place which might reveal or affect Soviet intentions in the event of Turkish military action against Syria. These include the following:

a. Khrushchev told US correspondent James Reston on 7 October, "If war breaks out, we are near Turkey and you are not. When the guns begin to fire, the rockets can begin flying, and then it will be too late to think about it ... In moving their troops, the Turks are even laying bare parts of their frontier with us. They should not do that. They are very weak. Turkey would not last one day in case of war." *

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* Quotations from the Reston version; the official Soviet text moderates these statements.

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b. A series of visits and statements by Arab leaders have placed Syria's neighbors in public alignment against foreign military intervention in Syria and UN consideration of Syrian affairs.

c. Soviet orbiting of an earth satellite, following the earlier announcement of an ICBM flight, has enhanced the popular image of Soviet military capabilities.

2. During the same period, there have been no major changes in Soviet-Syrian relations. In addition, we have no evidence from any source of Soviet military activity indicative of preparations for possible moves against Turkey.

3. Our estimate in SNIE 11-9-57 that the USSR would be "highly unlikely" to take direct military action against Turkey rested upon *as limited* Soviet fears that this would precipitate general war. Initial Soviet successes with the ICBM and satellite have not yet improved its capability to wage such a war. Furthermore, we do not believe that the Soviet leaders would estimate that these successes, despite their possible effect upon Western popular opinion, have significantly changed US and UK intentions in the event of a Soviet attack on Turkey. Therefore we continue to regard direct military action against Turkey to be highly unlikely. As before, however, "we cannot exclude such action wholly,

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having in mind particularly the possible Soviet belief that the US would not in the last analysis resort to general war," although the US statement of 10 October makes this belief less likely.

4. A supporting consideration to this conclusion was that "the USSR would expect a widespread popular Arab reaction against Turkey (and against the US as Turkey's apparent sponsor), which could subsequently be turned to major Soviet advantage in the Middle East." We believe that this consideration has gained additional force from the recent commitments of other Arab leaders against foreign intervention. As contrasted to the situation three weeks ago, we believe that the USSR now probably has somewhat greater expectations that a Turkish invasion of Syria would result in gains in strength by nationalist and leftist forces in other Arab countries. This expectation in turn will, in Soviet calculations, reduce the net damage caused to the USSR's Middle Eastern position by a Turkish victory over Syria and therefore lessen its willingness to risk general war.

5. Khrushchev's remarks to Roston go only slightly further in belligerency than previous Soviet warnings to Turkey. Nevertheless, if only by repetition, they strengthen the public image of the USSR as Syria's protector and will tend to increase the pressure upon the Soviet

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leaders to take concrete action in the event of a Turkish attack.

Because of this factor, and also because of further public commitments to Syria by her Arab neighbors, we believe that, while recourse to the UN will probably remain the major Soviet response, threatening gestures and indirect military support are more likely than before. Military gestures along the Turkish frontier, previously described as possible, we now regard as probable.

6. With respect to "volunteers," we previously estimated that "they might risk" sending such assistance (to Syria) "if (they) considered that the prevailing climate of opinion would sharply inhibit Western countermoves, and that Syria could be effectively assisted." The chances are somewhat better now of such assistance in view of the probable Soviet estimate that inhibitions to Western countermoves have increased, but doubt concerning the effectiveness of such action must still remain. However, because of the difficulties of intervening in strength great enough to be decisive yet small enough not to run a grave risk of serious Western countermoves, we continue to believe that "the USSR would be reluctant to try to oppose Turkish forces by large scale use of Soviet forces in Syria."

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